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THE
SIEGE AND CAPTURE OF HARPER'S FERRY

BY THE CONFEDERATES,

SEPTEMBER, 1862.

BY

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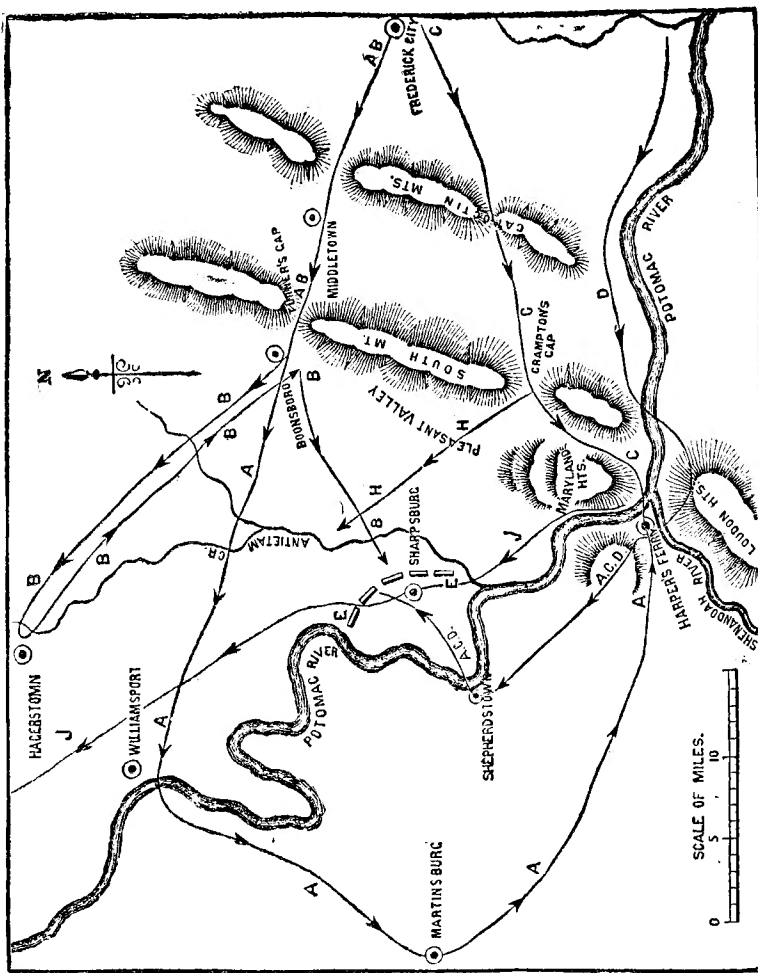
THE object of this paper is to give a description of an important event in the Maryland Campaign of September, 1862, which had considerable bearing upon the battle of the Antietam, the "Siege and Capture of Harper's Ferry by the Confederates," and which may be of interest from the fact that among its defenders was the Seventh Squadron of Rhode Island Cavalry. This squadron and the Ninth Regiment of Vermont Infantry were the only organizations from New England in the garrison of Harper's Ferry at this time. The Seventh Squadron was organized in the city of Providence, R. I., for three months' service, and left for Washington, D. C., June 28, 1862, under command of Major A. W. Corliss. It consisted of two companies, one of which (B) was made up mainly from students of Dartmouth College and Norwich University.

After a few weeks in camp near Washington and

Fairfax Seminary, Va., engaged in drill and camp duties, they joined a detached brigade of Sigel's First Army Corps, at Winchester, Va., commanded by General Julius White. The disastrous termination of Pope's campaign at the second Bull Run battle, August 30, 1862, had brought his army and the Army of the Potomac within the protection of the fortifications around Washington, and caused Lee to determine upon an invasion of Maryland. On the third of September he moved on Leesburg, and between the fourth and seventh crossed the fords of the Potomac and encamped near Frederick, Md. Pope having been relieved and sent to the Department of the Northwest, McClellan was placed in command of the Union forces, and advanced his army slowly, on the north side of the Potomac, his left resting on the river.

By the thirteenth he had reached Frederick, Lee retiring before him. Lee had expected that his advance upon Frederick would cause the evacuation of Harper's Ferry and Martinsburg by the Union troops commanded by Colonel Miles, and thereby leave open his lines of communication through the Shen-

andoah Valley. This not occurring, it became necessary that the forces in those places should be dislodged. McClellan's advance being so very slow, Lee judged that he would have ample time to capture both points and concentrate his army again before McClellan would attack him. Accordingly on September 9th he issued Special Order, No. 191, instructing General Jackson, with three divisions (including A. P. Hill's and Ewell's), to cross the Potomac near Sharpsburg, above Harper's Ferry, capture any forces at Martinsburg, and thence proceed toward Harper's Ferry to prevent any troops escaping from there. General McLaws, with his own and Anderson's divisions, was to move via Middletown directly south and seize Maryland Heights with the object of capturing Harper's Ferry. General Walker, with a division, was to cross the Potomac below Harper's Ferry, ascend the southern bank and occupy Loudon Heights, co-operating with Jackson and McLaws. These dispositions were promptly carried out. Jackson left Frederick on the tenth, crossed the Potomac on the eleventh near Williamsport, entered Martinsburg on the twelfth,



REBEL MOVEMENTS ON HARPER'S FERRY AND ANTIETAM.

A A—Jackson's march from Frederick to Harper's Ferry. C C—McLaws' and Anderson's march from Frederick to Maryland Heights. D D—Walker's march from the Monocacy to Loudon Heights. A C D—Enemy's line of march from Harper's Ferry to Antietam. B B—Longstreet's march to Antietam. H H—Franklin's march from Pleasant Valley to Antietam. J J—Line of march of the Union Cavalry escaping from Harper's Ferry night before the surrender. E E—Lee's line of battle during the battle of the Antietam.

and encamped about two miles from our lines on Bolivar Heights, at about noon on the thirteenth. McLaws reached Pleasant Valley on the eleventh. On the twelfth he had a part of his force on Maryland Heights, and on the night of the thirteenth was in full possession. Walker crossed the Potomac at Point of Rocks by daylight of the eleventh, and during the thirteenth occupied Loudon Heights.

A copy of this order was found shortly after noon of September 13th on one of the abandoned campgrounds of the Confederate troops, occupied the evening before by D. H. Hill's corps, and was taken immediately to General McClellan. McClellan was thus furnished with a clear description of the intended movements of Lee. It showed that by sending Jackson and Walker across the Potomac, he had divided his army, and while so divided it was placed at the mercy of McClellan. This information called for the utmost speed in the movements of the Army of the Potomac, as an excellent opportunity was given to defeat the rebel army in detail. McClellan acted with considerable energy, but his movements were not as vigorous as the situation demanded. The

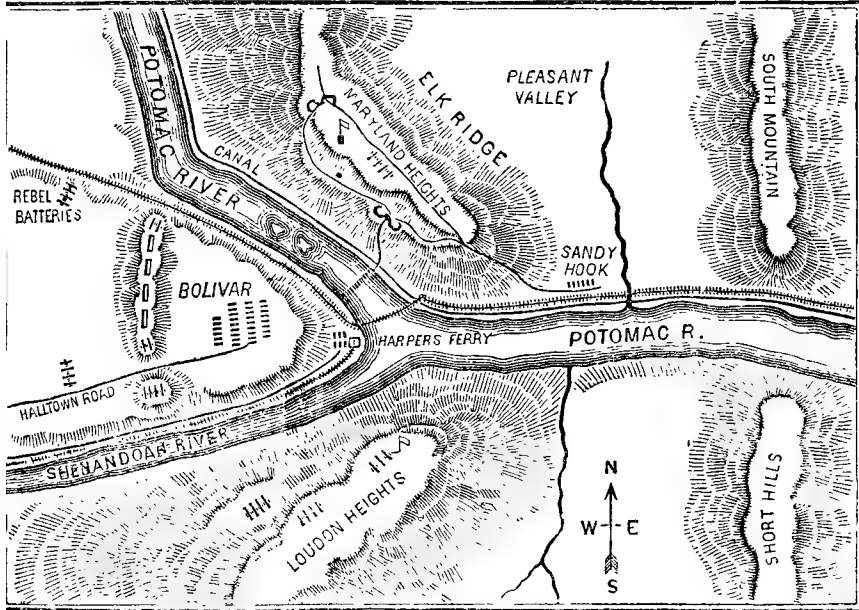
troops of his centre and right wing were directed against Turner's Gap, and Franklin with his corps was ordered to carry Crampton's Gap and fall upon McLaws. Franklin should have moved immediately, but it was not until the fourteenth that he marched, and he did not carry Crampton's Gap until the afternoon of that day. That night he moved into Pleasant Valley, where he was opposed by some brigades (detached from McLaws' divisions) which he had defeated in the forenoon. McClellan was now in position to relieve Harper's Ferry, Franklin being within seven miles of that place; but it was too late, for Miles surrendered the next morning. Had McClellan used a little more celerity he would have been in time; or had Miles held out twenty-four hours longer, which he might have done but for the early withdrawal of the forces from Maryland Heights, the place would have been relieved. Two days, or more, before the enemy reached Loudon Heights, McClellan seeing that the troops at Harper's Ferry were of but little use there, and that the place could not be held if attacked by Lee, suggested to General Halleck that Colonel Miles' force

be withdrawn and joined to his own. Halleck replied that there was no way for Miles to join McClellan and that he must defend his position until McClellan could establish communication with him. Miles could easily have retired by the south side of the Potomac in time. Had he retired, however, Jackson's and Walker's commands would not have been delayed so long across the Potomac, and would have rejoined Lee so much earlier, and McClellan would have lost the opportunity to beat the enemy in detail. Clearly the best policy was to hold Harper's Ferry as long as possible and thus keep Lee's army divided. Lee did not anticipate a siege at Harper's Ferry. As it was, the forces against Harper's Ferry were delayed there long enough for McClellan to have taken ample advantage of the perilous position of the rebel forces thus divided. The battle of the Antietam should have been fought a day or two before it was, and then Lee would have been deprived of the valuable aid furnished by Jackson and A. P. Hill on the sixteenth and seventeenth. If McClellan did not avail himself of this great opportunity to defeat Lee's

army in detail, which opportunity was brought about in more or less measure by Colonel Miles, it was not the fault of Colonel Miles. Harper's Ferry should have been relieved, and McClellan or Franklin could have done it. It has been said by a competent critic that had Lee at this time been in command of the Army of the Potomac he would have annihilated the rebel army, even although the latter were led by another Lee, with Jackson and Longstreet to help him.

The brigade at Winchester, to which the Seventh Squadron was attached, under orders from General Halleck, retreated from that place about 11 o'clock on the night of the second of September, after blowing up the forts and destroying all the government property that could be destroyed, and entered Harper's Ferry the next day. General White left us at Harper's Ferry and proceeded to Martinsburg under orders to take command there. Above Washington the course of the Potomac is from northwest to southeast. About thirty miles northwest of Washington lies Leesburg, on the southern side of the Potomac, and about twenty miles further northwest

is the town of Harper's Ferry, situated on the same side of the river. The Shenandoah, which flows northerly through the Shenandoah Valley in Vir-



HARPER'S FERRY.

ginia, here enters the Potomac after dividing the tongue of land upon which the town is situated, and Bolivar Heights back of the town, from Loudon Heights which overhang its right bank.

The Elk Ridge, running north and south across parts of Virginia and Maryland, is here divided by the Potomac, which cuts through these lofty and bold abutments of rock, on its way to the sea. The precipitous steep on the north side of the river is called Maryland Heights, and that on the south Loudon Heights. The space between Maryland Heights and the river is completely filled by a canal and narrow road. The railroad bridge crosses the river just under the precipice of Maryland Heights. The river here is about 300 yards wide. The ridge on either side of the gap, through which the united rivers force their majestic way, rises in steep and partly bare cliffs to an elevation of 800 to 1,200 feet. The town itself is situated on the point of the tongue of land formed by the meeting of the two rivers on ground which gradually rises to a tableland about 500 feet above the water level. The houses, which are of a very common description, built some of stone and some of unpainted wood, are irregularly placed on each side of the two or three streets which the town contains. The hill is so steep that one house rises above another in ap-

parent danger of toppling over upon its lower neighbor. A lapse of twenty years or more since the war fails to show any improvement in the appearance of the town. The ruins of the United States Arsenal remain as they were left by the rebels. The same houses are there and apparently no new ones. About the only improvements are those near the depot. But the scenery there is magnificent and beautiful beyond description.

Back of the town two miles or more is the low ridge known as Bolivar Heights, which extends from near the Potomac some two miles towards the south, dropping down to a lower plateau near the Winchester turnpike, and then rising again into a slight eminence and finally sloping more or less steeply to the Shenandoah. Standing on either Maryland, Bolivar or Loudon Heights and looking in either direction, the simple grandeur of the scene is most impressive. One can gaze upon these shaggy, frowning cliffs for hours with awe and at the same time intense delight. At times clouds can be seen lazily skirting or ascending the mountain sides. It is a wild and picturesque spot and worthy a long jour-

ney to view. From Bolivar, looking easterly, with the imposing steeps of Maryland Heights on your left, and the beautiful slopes of Loudon on your right, with the two rivers now united in one broad and beautiful stream flowing between and beyond, the picture is fascinating to the eye.

Maryland Heights far overtop both Loudon and Bolivar, and completely command Harper's Ferry. Looking up from the town Maryland Heights seem ready to drop upon it. Between the tops of any two of these heights the distance is about two miles, which is within the range of rifled cannon. Harper's Ferry itself is a mere military trap, lying, as it were, at the bottom of a teacup; but Maryland Heights, from which even a plunging musketry fire into the town is feasible, is a very strong position, and would be difficult to assault if its rearward slope were held by a determined and properly handled force.

Running north and south between the Elk Ridge (the south end of which is called Maryland Heights) on the west, and the South Mountain or Blue Ridge on the east, is a beautiful valley called Pleasant

Valley. It is "a perfect picture of pastoral beauty," dotted with villages and farms. The Potomac runs along the south end of both ridges. The valley is about two miles wide and is approached from the east by a pass at the south end of the Blue Ridge and also by gaps in the same ridge north of the Potomac. One of these, five miles north from the Potomac, called Crampton's Gap, is the one which General Franklin forced on the fourteenth of September. The outlets from the valley westerly are the gorge or pass at the south end of Maryland Heights and another five miles north over the Elk Ridge, called Solomon's Gap, which is of rather difficult ascent. Between the foot of Maryland Heights and the Blue Ridge is a small settlement called Sandy Hook.

The Union troops at Harper's Ferry were disposed as follows, Colonel Miles of the regular army being in command: the first brigade, commanded by Colonel D'Utassy (Thirty-ninth New York), consisting of the Thirty-ninth, One Hundred and Eleventh, One Hundred and Fifteenth New York Volunteers, and the Fifteenth Indiana Battery (Von Sehlin's); and

the second brigade, Colonel Trimble (Sixtieth Ohio) commanding, comprising the Sixtieth Ohio, Ninth Vermont, and One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York Volunteers, and Potts' Battery (Company F, Thirty-second Ohio), were formed in front on Bolivar Heights. This position forms the base of the triangle between the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers. In the rear of Bolivar Heights, nearer the town, was a second line on what was known as Camp Hill, and here was placed as a reserve the Fourth Brigade, under Colonel Ward (Twelfth New York), composed of the Twelfth New York and Eighty-seventh Ohio Volunteers, Rigby's First Independent Indiana Battery and Graham's Company A, Fifth New York Heavy Artillery. Along these lines were mounted about a dozen howitzers, and on the extreme left were placed four Parrotts and twelve-pounders. These four pieces commanded the approach by the Shenandoah road and also up the Potomac from Sandy Hook. All of these guns commanded the position on Bolivar Heights, and raked the whole plain across which troops must advance before they could reach the inner line on Camp Hill,

and having the range of Maryland and Loudon Heights made the position a strong one.

Maryland Heights, across the river from Harper's Ferry, rise some 1,200 feet. Hardly half way up these heights, on the west slope, were placed two ten-inch Dahlgrens, one fifty-pounder gun and two twelve-pounder howitzers, under Captain McGrath of the Fifth New York Artillery. Two twelve-pounder guns were afterwards added. This position commanded all the other batteries and the surrounding country. A shot from the Dahlgrens could be thrown into Halltown, about two miles beyond the Federal position on Bolivar. Supporting this battery was the Third Brigade, Colonel Ford (Thirty-second Ohio) commanding, comprising the Thirty-second Ohio Volunteers, three companies of the First Maryland Regiment (Potomac Home Brigade), a detachment of the Fifth New York Artillery, two companies of the First Maryland Cavalry, and the Seventh Squadron of Rhode Island Cavalry—an aggregate of about 1,150 men.

At and around Sandy Hook a force under Colonel Maulsby, consisting of five companies of the First

Maryland Regiment (Potomac Home Brigade), eight companies of the Eighty-seventh Ohio Volunteers, three pieces of Potts' artillery, and Captain Cole's company of Maryland Cavalry, were placed to prevent surprise and repel attack up the eastern side of Maryland Heights, as well as to guard the approach to the ferry around the bend of the Potomac. At Shepardsstown, farther up the Potomac, were stationed the Third Maryland Regiment (Potomac Home Brigade), Lieutenant-Colonel Downey, and the Eighth New York Cavalry, Colonel Davis.

The actual conflict began on Friday morning, September 12th, by shelling of our pickets out of Solomon's Gap by the enemy. Kershaw's and Barksdale's brigades of McLaws' force advanced from Pleasant Valley and gradually compelled our troops to fall back along the ridge to the top of the mountain.

The nature of the ground on Maryland Heights was unsuitable for the movement of troops, being in part very rugged, and in part covered with dense woods and undergrowth, obscuring the vision. From the river (Potomac) near and above where the rail-

road bridge crosses, a rather difficult road led up around the western slope of the mountain to the top and from the top down the eastern side to near Sandy Hook. About half way up this road were placed McGrath's guns previously alluded to. Along the ridge of the mountain ran a path for nearly a mile to the highest point, called the "lookout," and then on about a quarter of a mile, where a slight breastworks of logs had shortly before been thrown across the ridge, and down the western slope for a short distance.

The east, or Pleasant Valley side, was so steep that no works were necessary. There was some slashing in front of the breastworks, south of which some twenty or thirty rods a path ran winding down towards Harper's Ferry to a spring and thence along the side of the mountain to the battery. A battalion of the Thirty-ninth New York had already arrived from the other side of the river, and the action becoming warm, the One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York, Colonel Sherrill, was ordered over as a reinforcement. The One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth New York and five companies of the Thirty-

second Ohio were ordered to the top of the mountain, where were already stationed a company of the Thirty-second Ohio and two companies of the Maryland regiment.

These troops immediately became engaged some distance in front of the slight breastworks. The skirmishing here was very sharp and the enemy's advance was thoroughly checked. Troops were stationed down the slope on the left to frustrate any flank movement. Night coming on the fighting ceased and the contestants slept on their arms in close proximity. Towards night, in the direction of Sandy Hook, the enemy largely increased their forces, and our men there stationed fell back in good order to near the bridge, a couple of shells from our guns dispersing a body of the enemy's cavalry.

During Friday considerable anxiety was felt for General White, commanding at Martinsburg. Colonel Davis, with the Eighth New York Cavalry, had been dispatched in that direction early in the morning to cover his retreat on Harper's Ferry.

Various rumors came in that White had been attacked and was still engaged, but late in the after-

noon he arrived and brought with him the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth New York, Sixty-fifth Illinois, the Twelfth Illinois Cavalry, and Phillips' Illinois Battery, which were assigned positions on Bolivar Heights. General White was now the ranking officer, but he waived his right of taking command for reasons very creditable to him, and offered his services and those of his troops to Colonel Miles. I am of the opinion that had General White thought proper to assume the command, the defence would have been conducted in a satisfactory manner, although his late arrival, two and a half days before the surrender, and the absence of the necessary means of defense which should have been prepared weeks before, would have prevented his saving the place. The next day, Saturday, the 13th, after repeated calls the day before by Colonel Ford for reinforcements, Lieutenant-Colonel Downey, with eight companies (about 400 men) of the Third Maryland, arrived on the heights about 9 A. M., and were stationed on the west slope; and seven companies of the One Hundred and Fifteenth New York arrived about noon and were placed on the left, on

the side of the hill near the old house and spring beyond McGrath's battery

The enemy advanced quite early in the morning, and opened fire some 500 yards or more in front of the breastworks of logs. They were here opposed by parts of the Thirty-second Ohio, Thirty-ninth New York and seven companies of the One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York, who during two hours' sharp skirmishing prevented any further advance, until the enemy brought up large reinforcements greatly outnumbering us and outflanking our left, when the troops were ordered to retire behind the breastworks, which was done rapidly, but in good order, firing as they went. This was a very sharp and spirited engagement over a very rough and wooded piece of ground. Four companies of Downey's regiment were retained by Colonel Ford, and Downey was ordered to take the remaining four and three companies of the Thirty-second Ohio in behind the breastworks and report to Colonel Sherrill. Heavy firing on both sides continued for some time. After a while the rebels were observed flanking around our left and some companies of the One

Hundred and Twenty-sixth were sent there on the double-quick to oppose them and the attempt was successfully checked, several of our men being killed and wounded.

The firing at the breastworks again became very hot, and Colonel Sherrill received a bad wound in the jaw and was borne to the rear. Our troops continued firing, effectually repulsing any attempts of the rebels to advance. About this time an aid brought a verbal order for the troops to retire to the rear of the lookout. This order seemed so unreasonable that it was not obeyed until it was stated that McGrath was about to shell the position. The troops then reluctantly fell back and made a stand on a ridge south of the lookout across the top of the mountain and, extending down the west slope, concentrated gradually nearer the battery. Barksdale's Mississippi brigade had got around our right flank down the east face of the mountain. Kershaw states that here a most obstinate resistance was encountered and his loss being heavy he was obliged, in supporting the attack, to send in another regiment which was also stoutly resisted.

Our men held this last position until between 2 and 3 P. M., when, much to their amazement, an order came from Colonel Ford to evacuate the heights and fall back to Harper's Ferry. After Colonel Sherrill was wounded there was no field officer in responsible command on the heights, and contradictory and confusing orders followed one another, and there was some skulking to the rear by individuals. The larger portion of the men were just from home and had not had their arms long enough to have learned to load and fire. There were many instances of bravery among these fresh troops. I noticed one boy of about eighteen, belonging to the One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York, who showed considerable pluck in enduring without a murmur a wound in his groin from which he soon died. It was a bad place in which to match green troops against veterans. The defense on the heights was badly managed. Colonel Ford remained during the fighting down near the battery instead of personally supervising operations on the heights. He was not competent for the position, but there were other colonels in the Harper's Ferry

garrison who were, and who would have held the place longer than it was held, and probably long enough to have been effectual. Solomon's Gap was *the* point to be defended, as that was the natural approach for McLaws and the key to Harper's Ferry. Only a picket force was there and McLaws' advance was but feebly resisted. The gap should have been defended in force with artillery

After McLaws got through the gap he had an equal advantage with us, and when he got to the crest of the mountain where the breastworks and "lookout" were located, he had everything in his favor. Ford should have held on longer, which he probably could have done, and thus given time for reinforcements to cross the river.

By far the larger part of the troops in Harper's Ferry were very raw. Most of them had been less than three months in the service, were under fire for the first time, and were hardly in condition to cope with the veteran Confederates surrounding them. It was said that McGrath, who commanded the batteries, upon receiving orders to spike his guns refused to obey and would not do so until he saw the

infantry deserting him. He felt so badly that he cried like a child, and told Colonel Ford that "it was the act of a traitor, no matter by whose orders it was done." It was supposed that Ford had orders to hold the heights to the last extremity, which had not then arrived. Colonel Miles told General White immediately after the evacuation that he gave no orders to withdraw from the heights; but he did not put Colonel Ford under arrest nor do anything to reoccupy the heights as he might and should have done.

The Dahlgrens were spiked and tipped over the hill and the other guns rendered useless. Colonel D'Utassy, commanding First Brigade, on Bolivar Heights, offered to go over and retake and hold the position but Colonel Miles refused permission, saying, "they have spiked the guns; it is no use."

After Ford's brigade had been withdrawn across the river and stationed on Bolivar Heights and Camp Hill, there were no further operations on Maryland Heights by the Federal forces, with the exception that at noon on the next day, Sunday, Colonel D'Utassy assumed the responsibility of sending over

four companies (two each of the Thirty-ninth New York and Sixty-fifth Illinois) under Major Wood, to bring off what they could of the abandoned guns and ammunition. They ascended the heights with little or no opposition and safely brought back four cannon and a considerable quantity of ammunition, which was afterwards used.

Captain Russell, with nine of his cavalrymen, under instructions from Colonel Miles, started on Saturday night for General McClellan's headquarters. After several encounters with the enemy's pickets he reached McClellan near Frederick on Sunday morning at 9 o'clock. Russell informed McClellan of the situation and that Miles had subsistence for forty-eight hours and probably could hold out that length of time. McClellan told him that Franklin was on his way to relieve the place and he sent a messenger off to urge Franklin forward. Russell could not get back to Harper's Ferry, and afterwards went with a note from McClellan to Franklin, which he delivered to Franklin about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, while he was fighting the battle at Crampton's Gap. Franklin drove the enemy from the gap and

rested for the night about seven miles from Harper's Ferry. Franklin could have relieved the place had he pushed on with celerity.

Just after the heights were evacuated on Saturday afternoon the enemy appeared in force on Loudon Heights and were noticed signalling. Batteries were opened upon them and three shots scattered them into the woods. Our shots were not replied to, the rebels apparently being busy getting a battery ready for work. Saturday night closed upon the defenders full of speculations as to what the morrow might bring forth. Although the evacuation of the position across the Potomac had made some impression upon them, yet they were in good spirits and ready for the fight. Sunday broke as bright and beautiful as could be wished. Graham's artillery opened early upon the Confederates on Loudon Heights, followed by the other batteries, and for a time the guns made lively music. The enemy did not reply, and it was rumored that they had retired. Just after dinner, however, they began firing from a battery on Loudon Heights, near the spot where they had been signalling. The Seventh

Squadron at this time occupied a slight ravine or plateau in front of Camp Hill right opposite this rebel battery. This ravine, if it may so be called, had a fringe of small trees in front, and another quite near the bluff overlooking the river, to which it descended very abruptly. We had nothing just then to do but lie there on the green turf, watching the artillery duel. It seemed as if we could stretch our arms across the river (Shenandoah) and upwards to the very spot where the rebels were, whom we could see quite plainly. Their shells at first fell far wide of the mark and we laughed at them, but they soon got the range and plumped shell after shell in among us, killing a few horses and causing a rush for cover. At the same time they had got a gun or two in position on the very top of Maryland Heights above our old position, and two pieces of long range on the Shepardstown road and Charlestown turnpike, and from there commenced throwing shells into the batteries on our right on Bolivar Heights, and into the town, demolishing the houses.

The fire of the enemy was constant until dark, and the cannonade was terrific. We were getting

now more shells than were pleasant. Camp Hill was occupied by Graham's and Potts' batteries and two twenty-four pounder howitzers and two twenty pounder Parrotts, supported by the Twelfth New York. The right of Bolivar Heights was held by the Thirty-ninth, One Hundred and Eleventh and One Hundred and Fifteenth New York, the Sixty-fifth Illinois and Phillips' and Von Sehlen's batteries, under Colonel D'Utassy. The left of Bolivar Heights was held by the Sixtieth Ohio, Ninth Vermont and One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York, with Rigby's Battery, under command of Colonel Trimble. The ground between the turnpike and the Shenandoah was occupied by the Third Maryland, under Lieutenant-Colonel Downey. The other troops not guarding the bridges were placed on the plateau near Bolivar Heights and in the ravines as much as possible.

Our batteries continued firing with brief intervals during the day. One twenty pounder Parrott and three guns were disabled, and two caissons were blown up. Late in the afternoon General Hill's division made an assault on our extreme left, which

was our weakest point. General White (Colonel Miles not being present) reinforced Colonel Downey with the Ninth Vermont and Thirty-second Ohio, and one section of Rigby's Battery. The firing was sharp and the action continued until dark when the enemy was repulsed. The troops here engaged behaved with great bravery, and the Ninth Vermont, a green regiment, under Colonel Stannard, showed conduct worthy of veterans. This was the heaviest fighting of the day. Our men slept upon their arms in the trenches.

Between 8 and 9 P. M. our squadron of cavalry was quietly formed in line and addressed by Major Corliss, who stated that the cavalry organizations had received permission to cut their way through the rebel lines then surrounding us and, if possible, join McClellan's army, ending with the remark that "any one not wishing to go could remain, for by the next morning we should all be in Pennsylvania, on the way to Richmond, or in hell." It was said that some, deeming the attempt hopeless, did not go, but no one fell out of the line in our company. We formed in with the other cavalry regiments, making a body

of about 1,500 men, and under command of Colonel Voss, Twelfth Illinois Cavalry, the senior officer, we filed across the Potomac over the pontoon in column of twos. The noise of the river running among sunken rocks deadened the clatter of the horses' hoofs. After safely reaching the Maryland side the head of the column turned to the left, passing along between the canal and the bluff and then to the right into the woods and up a steep road. "Keep well closed up and follow your leaders," was the order passed in a low tone from the head to the rear of the column. One company, owing to the darkness of the night, went astray on reaching the shore and turned to the right and ran upon a strong rebel picket guard. The mistake was discovered and they turned back and rejoined the column.

Near the road leading up Maryland Heights from the river the head of the column encountered another strong picket guard, which was scattered by a charge, the enemy's shots doing no damage. It was now every man for himself; the pace was rapidly increased and woe to him who should lose his place. The route of march was continued at a hard gallop

crossing the Antietam, and thence on through corn-fields, across lots and by-roads to Sharpsburg, where Lee had his headquarters twenty-four hours afterwards and during the battle of the Antietam. A brief halt was made in the principal street. The rebel sympathizers here mistook us for the advance of Burnside's corps. Beyond the town several cavalry pickets were discovered. A charge was promptly executed and the enemy driven off. The route was here changed to avoid the enemy, who were in force on the main roads leading toward Hagerstown, and we began another spirited dash through ravines, over creeks, fences and fields.

Only by urging one's steed against the one ahead could place in line be retained. The dust rose in clouds and many men were lost and did not turn up for days afterwards. At one time I found myself entirely alone in the night and knew not which way to go, but letting my horse choose his own course, in what seemed an hour's time I fell in with the main body. We kept on at this breakneck pace, bearing off to the left and passing over that now historic ground on which was formed the rebel left on the

seventeenth; heading toward Williamsport in order to clear Lee's army, which was then concentrating for the battle expected to be fought on the sixteenth between Sharpsburg and the Antietam. *Had* it been fought on that day, instead of the following one, the battle of the Antietam would have been a complete triumph for the Union arms, for Lee would have been without the valuable aid furnished by A. P. Hill and McLaws, who did not reach there until the morning of the seventeenth.

Now and then the bivouac fires of the enemy could be seen, and in one instance we gallantly dashed into them, surprising the enemy so much that we received but little harm. Just before day-break, about two miles from Williamsport, the distant rumbling of wagons was distinctly heard. A brief halt was made and many improved the opportunity to slip from the saddle and snatch a little sleep on the ground. The situation became interesting to our commander when it was found that the force in our front was an ammunition train of nearly 100 wagons, belonging to General Longstreet, guarded by a force of cavalry and infantry. The

men were aroused and a charge was ordered. The rebels retreated and we hotly pursued. Now and then we came up with a wagon with a wheel off or otherwise disabled. We captured all the wagons and about 100 men. Most of these wagons had been captured shortly before from General Pope, near Centreville, Va. They were filled with every conceivable kind of a missile to fire from a cannon; pieces of chain, spikes, old horse shoes, etc., etc. It was stated that in one was the body of a General killed at South Mountain the day before. The next morning about 9 o'clock we arrived at Greencastle, Pa., where the inhabitants gave us a cordial welcome, and what we had not enjoyed for a long time, a bountiful repast. This exploit of ours was deemed a hazardous undertaking. Many doubted our ability to break through the rebel lines, as Lee's army occupied most of that country between the Potomac and the Antietam through which our route lay. We had good guides. Much of the success of the expedition was due to Colonel B. F. Davis, of the Eighth New York Cavalry, who was afterward recommended by General McClellan for the brevet of Major in the

regular army for conspicuously commendable conduct on this occasion.

Colonel Davis was killed at Beverly Ford, Va., the following June, while in command of a brigade of cavalry. Between one hundred and two hundred men were reported as missing; some of them afterwards rejoining their regiments.

When General McClellan heard of the affair he expressed his pleasure and said it was the only redeeming feature of the defence of Harper's Ferry. The rebels, when they found that the cavalry had gotten safely away, were filled with rage, as they needed our horses badly to supply their remounts. Our arrival at Greencastle was reported to General McClellan, who was then at Hagerstown, making preparations for the battle of the Antietam, and we received orders from him to report at Jones Cross Roads, between Hagerstown and Sharpsburg. The battle was in full blast upon our arrival, and our duties were to guard against any flanking movement against the right wing of the Army of the Potomac.

Let us return to the defence at Harper's Ferry. During Sunday night the enemy obtained a lodge-

ment upon and beyond our extreme left and planted new batteries : two upon the plateau at the foot of Loudon Heights on the east side of the Shenandoah ; one, of ten guns, upon a knoll to the front of our extreme left, enfilading our works on Bolivar Heights ; one upon the Charlestown turnpike ; one opposite the centre of Bolivar Heights, and one upon our extreme right near the Potomac — in all about fifty guns. Early on Monday morning they opened from all these batteries, nearly from all points of the compass, and rained a terrific fire of shot and shell upon the doomed garrison. The rebels had complete range and raked our whole position. Our batteries replied with the utmost vigor until, as soon happened, the supply of long range ammunition failed. One of the rebel officers states in a letter, regarding the situation at their position opposite our extreme left, that the orders were to charge at sunrise, and at dawn he crept up from the ravine where his men were stationed, to observe the lay of the land. On coming back he was asked, "How is it?" It looked so serious to him that he replied : "We will say our prayers and go in like men."

Presently came the order, "Prepare to charge," and they moved steadily up the hill. The sun just then came out of the fog and the signal for surrender was seen. The way was so difficult of access that it took the Confederates half an hour to reach our works.

Colonel Miles at about 9 A. M. called his brigade commanders together for consultation. The council of war were unanimously of the opinion that further resistance was useless, and with great reluctance on the part of some, voted for capitulation if honorable terms could be obtained. Just before this council was called General White, who had command on Bolivar Heights near the Charlestown road, ordered the artillery to be massed there and the troops on Camp Hill to move to the front. There would have been a fight there and then had not Colonel Miles countermanded the order. There is, however, no doubt that Jackson would have taken the place in spite of us, as the result of opposing him with two batteries and six regiments of raw recruits and only rifle-pits for defences is plainly apparent. By order of Colonel Miles the white flag was displayed along

our lines, and General White was commissioned to arrange terms of capitulation. Owing to the fog and smoke the rebels did not at once see the signal of surrender, but continued artillery firing for half an hour or more, during which time Colonel Miles was struck by a piece of shell which tore the flesh entirely from the calf of his leg, inflicting a wound of which he died the next day. After the gunnery had ceased General White was conducted to General Jackson, who was sitting on his horse near the church on the Halltown road. Gen. A. P. Hill and General White arranged the terms of surrender.

These were that private property of individuals and side arms of officers should be retained by them ; that officers and men should be paroled until regularly exchanged, and that all the munitions of war and public property belonging to the United States should be surrendered to General Hill. The rebels thus came into possession of about 12,000 prisoners, forty-seven guns, 13,000 small arms, and a large quantity of short range ammunition, camp equipage, etc., etc. The total casualties on our side were 217 in killed and wounded.

The loss of the rebels must have been much greater. McLaws reports his loss on Maryland Heights at 213 in killed and wounded. A. P. Hill states his loss as sixty-nine in killed and wounded. Jackson and Walker do not give their losses, but each of these must have been as great as Hill's. Our brigade on Maryland Heights seems to have inflicted the heaviest loss upon the rebels, for McLaws' casualties were nearly as many as the total Federal loss in all positions.

Jackson by a severe night's march reached Sharpsburg on the morning of the sixteenth, ready for the battle of the Antietam on the next day. Hill left Harper's Ferry on the morning of the seventeenth, and arrived on the battlefield of the Antietam at 2.30 P. M., just in time to repulse Burnside's (until that time) victorious assault on the rebel right. Walker reported to Lee on the morning of the sixteenth and McLaws on the morning of the seventeenth.

Just before the white flag was raised, Colonel Stannard, of the Ninth Vermont, swore he would never surrender, and double-quickened his regiment

down to the pontoon. Here they were intercepted and brought back after the surrender. Colonel D'Utassy had his men unscrew the nipples of their guns, spiked his batteries and brought away with him the flags of his brigade.

The Federal forces were paroled and marched to Annapolis, Md., and from there sent to Chicago and exchanged the following February, and those regiments whose term of service had not expired served gallantly in various armies East and West until the close of the war. Colonel Ford was suffering greatly during the engagement from fistula. He was dismissed from the service and died some years later. General Julius White, who at the time of the fight was about forty-five years of age, is still living in Chicago. After his exchange in December, 1862, he commanded a division of the Twenty-third Corps in East Tennessee in the Knoxville Campaign, was afterwards ordered to the Army of the Potomac; for a short time Burnside's chief of staff, and subsequently in command of First Division, Ninth Army Corps, participating in several battles in front of Petersburg. Major Corliss, who commanded the

Seventh Squadron, Rhode Island Cavalry, is now a Captain in the Eighth Infantry, United States Army, and stationed at Fort Robinson, Nebraska.

Colonel Stannard, of the Ninth Vermont, served throughout the war until severely wounded, and distinguished himself on many battle-fields, notably at Gettysburg on the third day as General in command of a division, where he contributed greatly to frustrate Pickett's charge.

Colonel Willard, of the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth New York, while in command of the Third Brigade, Third Division of the Second Corps, to which was attached the Thirty-ninth, One Hundred and Eleventh, One Hundred and Twenty-fifth and One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York Volunteers, was instantly killed at Gettysburg on the second day, and the next day, his successor, Colonel Sherrill, of the One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York, was mortally wounded. The losses of this brigade at Gettysburg amounted to one-half the casualties in the division.

A commission was appointed September 23, 1862, to make inquiry into the conduct of the operations

at Harper's Ferry. After taking a mass of testimony it reported that nothing deserving of censure had been found in the conduct of the subordinate officers with the exception of Colonel Ford, of the Thirty-second Ohio, and Major Baird, of the One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York. For bad conduct on Maryland Heights Major Baird was recommended for dismissal from the service. Some of the officers of the One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York were commended for gallantry

In the estimation of the commission Colonel Ford was disqualified from holding a command in the service by lack of military capacity. It found that he conducted the defence on Maryland Heights without ability and abandoned his position without sufficient cause. In the case of Colonel Miles it was found that he had acted with utter incapacity, and that General Wool should be censured for placing such an incapable officer in command of so important a position. Such incapacity, amounting to almost imbecility, as was shown by Colonel Miles, led to the shameful surrender. He disobeyed positive orders to fortify Maryland Heights, given a month before

the surrender, and when attacked did not improve the naturally strong positions.

The commission also commented on General McClellan's slow advance of only six miles per day, when pursuing the invading enemy in Maryland, and expressed the opinion that he could and should have relieved and protected Harper's Ferry. General White was found by the commission to have acted with decided capability and courage.

During the proceedings of the commission some officers gave testimony damaging to the One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York Volunteers, as to the conduct of that regiment during the engagement on Maryland Heights. This testimony was entirely unknown to the regiment or its officers, and they never suspected that its conduct was in question or even under consideration until the findings of the commission were published in the newspapers. After that an application was made in due form and sent through regular channels to the War Department, containing unqualified and positive denials of each and every allegation against the regiment and its officers, and asking for a commission to inquire

into the facts with an opportunity for the officers to be heard. To this no satisfactory reply was ever made. None of the officers knew the character of the testimony until after the close of the war, it being kept secret, and no access could be had to it, except in the single case of Major Baird, of that regiment, who, backed by the influence of many distinguished officers, civil and military, was finally after many months of persistent importunity permitted to read the testimony so far as it related to himself, but he was not permitted to copy any portion of it. His persistency enabled him to get reinstated, and he returned to the regiment after an absence of a year, and was afterwards killed while in command of the regiment in front of Petersburg, in 1864. Major (afterwards Colonel) Baird was a brave and gallant officer, and before the Harper's Ferry affair had served in another regiment during the Peninsular Campaign as an officer.

In conclusion I may say that Harper's Ferry is not a place to be held — neither side tried to retain it after our failure to do so.

One of the causes of Hooker's resignation in

June, 1863, when on his way toward Gettysburg, was Halleck's refusal to allow him to withdraw the garrison from that place. Meade, his successor, was, however, allowed to do so.

Only by erecting strong works on Maryland and Loudon Heights, heavily armed, with facilities for water and garrisoned by a force large enough to defend each independent of the other, can the place be held.

